

# Another Northern Exposure

EDITOR OF THE BOOK SECTION—Sir:

**A**N irksome duty devolves upon me, a task that must be abhorrent to every right minded man—the task of impeaching and exposing a friend. My impeachment lies against Dr. Walter E. Traprock, explorer, lecturer, discoverer of the Filbert Islands and master mind of all the Kawa expeditions.

I have just finished "My Northern Exposure," Dr. Traprock's new book, in which he claims to have spent six consecutive months at the North Pole in my company, and, ere the impulse toward truth and duty depart from me, feel compelled solemnly to impeach him on four grave and separate counts.

As one who regards ladies as sacrosanct beings, I impeach him as a philanderer. As a total abstainer, I impeach him as an arch enemy of excise enforcement. As a vegetarian, I impeach him as a common cannibal. And, finally, as a student of astronomy, I impeach him as a slipshod and wholly inaccurate scientist.

Before substantiating these sinister charges I beg your permission to outline the bare skeleton of our tragical trip to the North.

First of all, a brief word about myself. My name is Herman Swank. I am a cubist or modernist artist. I paint much in the manner of Pablo Picasso—even a little more so. I have known Dr. Traprock since he left (I do not employ the words "graduated from") Yale and have accompanied him on all his voyages; over the sunlit spaces of the South Seas to the far flung forests of Formosa, on the hazardous heights of the Himalayas and, finally, on his six months carouse (I can bestow upon it no softer name) in the Arctic night. My title on all of these cruises was that of "Official Painter and Landscapist."

Well, sir, late in the month of May, 1921, the Kawa steamed from New York and headed north with a party of ten men, including Dr. Traprock himself, Warburton Plock, our anthropologist, who, as you will learn later on, finished the cruise as a meat course; Reginald Whinney, our scientist, who was stricken with snow blindness before we reached the Arctic Circle; also a magnetician, a cartographer, a snow expert, an Egyptologist, an entertainer, a sea captain and a cubist painter—myself. At St. John's our company was augmented by a sewing woman, Sausalito by name (alleged to be the wife of our stalwart sea captain), to whom the Doctor immediately became markedly attentive. When we reached the Arctic Circle we were joined (according to the author, and may Heaven forgive him for so wilful a perversion of the truth) by a group of Eskimo *ungna* or girls of the Klinka tribe. These girls were named, respectively, Snak, Ikik, Yalok, Kliptok and Lapatok. They were young, innocent, pleasure loving and beautiful.

After many delays and hardships we reached, on July 3, what seemed like an excellent *igloo noona*, or camping ground. This spot Dr. Traprock, without the slightest scientific verification, immediately pronounced the Pole! We accepted his dictum without question, and forthwith proceeded to pitch camp, build igloos for the ladies, hold a record breaking Christmas celebration, withstand the scurvy, kill or capture many musk ox, Arctic foxes and other game, suffer a violent mutiny, lose two members of our party by natural death and one by eating, and, finally, to sleep fitfully during the better part of a six months arctic night.

In March, 1922, we left our camp, sailed south and sighted Fire Island on April 23, eleven months and three days after leaving New York. The incredibly short time occupied by our trip was due to the fact that the Kawa was fitted with the latest type of engines, electrical appliances and mechanical devices, including folding sides, movable waterline, sealskin bottom and magnetic bowsprit.

These are the main incidents in the narrative. I should not now expose the author as a falsifier of the first magnitude did not

## DR. TRAPROCK, THE INTREPID EXPLORER, TRAPPED AT LAST. THE TRUTH CONCERNING THE KAWA'S RECENT ARCTIC TRIP.

By HERMAN SWANK, A Survivor of the Expedition.

Truth and the Public Welfare seem so palpably to demand it. I feel also that certain of the doctor's recent and unwarranted attacks upon my art have been prompted by jealousy (jealousy in love matters, I mean), an outstanding characteristic of his nature, and that his charges have been so gross that an immediate denial of his published falsehoods seems in order. Why, I ask you—unless jealously had deranged his reason—did he say in his recent interview in the Chicago *Tribune* that my heroic oil painting of the Aurora Borealis (made on our polar expedition) "resembled nothing so much as a dish of blue tripe"? An why did he announce, in his speech at the Chamber of Commerce banquet, that

Throughout our voyage the Doctor's attentions to Sausalito, our sewing woman; to Snak and Ikik, and to the various authentic Eskimo *ungna* (virgins) who joined our party, was little short of an open scandal. He was forever arranging sentimental games with them—fox-skull ball, seal rolling, fish-in-the-pool, &c.—casting amorous glances in their direction, bolting unannounced into their igloos even at the ante-prandial dressing hour, and bestowing upon them an endless succession of presents, such as necklaces of dog teeth, Kewpie dolls, police whistles, plug tobacco, ptarmigan eggs, gumdrops, snow goggles, sardine cans, wristlets of bear claws, fly swatters and teething



Herman Swank and Kliptok.

the Eskimo maidens in our party used my series of Greenland water colors "with marked success in frightening off walrus and polar bears"? Jealousy, undisguised jealousy, due to the fact that Snak and Ikik, two of the so called Klinka maidens of our party, were throughout the arctic night forever flying in terror before Traprock's advances and seeking the solacing shelter of my igloo.

But enough of Traprock's barbaric views of Art.

Now for the first and most unpleasant of my charges, a charge that forever links the doctor's name with those of Casanova, Solomon, Bel Ami, (French) Benjamin Franklin and Nat Goodwin, men who, like Traprock himself were iron in their affairs with men, but putty in their *affaires* with women. My dear Mr. Editor, I beg you to prepare yourself for a great moral shock. The two young women, Snak and Ikik, invariably spoken of in the book as Eskimos, were not Eskimos at all. They were American girls, well known in New York, one as an actress in emotional roles and the other as a barefoot dancer who, even as I write, is appearing there in high class vaudeville. Both of these ladies were secreted by Traprock in the forward hatches of the Kawa, before we left New York, and released by him as soon as we had passed Steeplechase Park in Coney Island, the doctor trying unsuccessfully to pledge us all to secrecy. A glance at their photographs in the book will satisfy any right minded person that what I say is gospel truth and that the ladies were native Americans and not in the least Asiatic in origin.

rinks—anything, in short, to win a smile from their all too lovely lips.

And here you will find the hidden reason for our inordinately long stay at the Pole. The Doctor simply could not tear himself away from the ladies! Every evening he posed before them as a sort of combination of Lou Tellegen and Rodolpho Valentino; he prepared aphrodisiacs or love philters for the Eskimo girls, and organized games of *ungna oompah*, a Klinka pastime closely resembling pillows and keys, a game in which the Doctor was invariably *It*. Corroborative evidence of his consuming vanity is to be found on page 194: "Ikik," he says, "my northern sweetheart, had her own ideas as to the disposal of my nocturnal hours, and the glances which she constantly leveled at me were, to say the least, importunate." This paragraph is particularly amusing in view of the fact that Ikik confessed to me on more than one occasion that she found the Doctor a dead egg.

My second charge links the Doctor's name with those of Bacchus, Daniel Webster, Falstaff, O. Henry, Paul Verlaine, (French), and Edgar Allan Poe—all slaves to alcohol and life-long examples of intemperance. The Doctor, by his own confession, took among his ship's supplies nearly six thousand solid alcohol plugs, suitable for fuel or purposes of illumination. These plugs were about the size and consistency of golf balls. On our return to New York I estimated, with the help of Reginald Whinney (the company's, God help us all!—scientist) that over five thousand of these compressed alcohol plugs had been consumed, by mouth, by Dr. Traprock

alone, while the remainder had been bestowed by him, at our various Christmas dinners, upon the ladies of our party. At the sixth and last of these Christmas banquets (held on January 11) the Doctor, as a result of five plugs consumed in rapid succession, first became completely illuminated and then passed off into a slumber so profound that all our efforts to arouse him proved abortive until the morning of January 19.

I come now to my third charge, the sinister one of cannibalism, as a result of which we lost Warburton Plock, our company anthropologist. Traprock in his book frankly confesses to eating Plock, but his published excuse for doing so—that our food supplies were running low and that Plock had openly mutinied and refused to obey orders—savors more of ingenuity than of sincerity. The naked truth is that the Doctor had long secretly detested Plock (he admits it in different parts of his narrative) and that a six months' Arctic diet—walrus roe, pemmican salad, ptarmigan omelettes, and seal blubber sandwiches—had begun to sicken him. He told me, on the evening before he shot our company anthropologist, that he had occasionally drunk bear's blood with the natives, and liked it, and that he often suffered from an abnormal craving for what the Eskimos call "long pig," or human flesh. I also regard the fact that Plock was by all odds the plumpiest of our party as more than a coincidence. Another suspicious incident was that before Plock had even been put on to boil a thick and highly flavored sauce had been prepared, by the Doctor's express orders, and stood steaming on the sideboard. Traprock's statement to the effect that he found his friend "extremely tough" is nothing but a cloak for his very palpable enjoyment of Mr. Plock, especially those parts of him that impinged upon the saddle and shoulder.

My fourth and final charge against the explorer is that he is in no sense of the word a scientist, astronomer, or even a latitudinarian. I never once saw an astrolabe in his hand nor a sextant, nor a temperature thermometer. I am convinced that we were at no time nearer than 300 miles to the Pole, and that without the slightest idea as to whether or not we had reached the convergence of the earth's meridional lines he called our camping ground the Pole. He settled there solely for the reason that it seemed to him an admirable camping site, with plenty of fresh fish, southerly breeze, wild game, morning sun and hot and cold running Eskimo girls. During our six months' stay there, instead of making unquestionable observations of all the fixed stars the Doctor was forever making questionable observations to the only two stars he hoped to fix, namely, the emotional actress and the barefoot dancer!

On one occasion, when I wanted to plumb the depths of his abysmal ignorance in matters of science, I asked him to define a meridian for me. He only stopped sucking one of his intolerable alcohol plugs long enough to observe that a meridian was any male inhabitant of Meriden (Conn.) I merely cite this *faux pas* in order to prove to your readers that his knowledge of science was of the sketchiest and most negligible character.

I trust, my dear Mr. Editor, that I have said enough to prove to your readers that, dauntless and intrepid as Dr. Traprock may sometimes be, he is still on certain regrettable occasions naught but a weak and erring Human Being.

Very respectfully yours,

HERMAN SWANK.  
Official Painter and Landscapist.

In a discussion of "American Literature" in one of the new supplementary volumes of the Encyclopædia Britannica, one reads the following: "From 1910-21 the most important and valuable biographical work was the 'Life of Mark Twain' (1912) by Albert Bigelow Paine, followed in 1917 by 'The Letters.'" Harper & Brothers originally published this biography in a three volume edition, but last year condensed it into two volumes. However, the demand for it is such that the publishers are contemplating bringing it out again in the original three volume edition.

MY NORTHERN EXPOSURE: THE KAWA AT THE POLE. By Walter E. Traprock, author of "The Cruise of the Kawa." G. P. Putnam's Sons.